

THE MYSTERY OF MORIS KLAU

By SAX ROHMER,
Author of "THE YELLOW CLAW," ETC.

THE BLUE RAJAH

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INSPECTOR GRIMSBY called upon me one evening, and I saw he wore a great gleam of countenance. "Look here," said he, "I'm in a bit of a corner. You'll have heard that a committee of commercial magnates has been formed to buy, and on behalf of the city of London present to the Crown, the big Indian diamond?"

I nodded, and pushed the box of cigarettes toward him. "Well," he continued, thoughtfully selecting one, "they are meeting in Moorgate Street tomorrow morning to complete the deal and formally take over the stone. Sir Michael Cayley, the Lord Mayor, will be present, and he's received a letter, which has been passed on to me."

"Here you are," he said, and quietly passed a letter to me. It read as follows: "To the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor of London."

"My Lord: Beware that the Blue Rajah is not stolen on Wednesday the 13th inst. Do not lose sight of it for one moment."

"Your Lordship's obedient servant, 'MORIS KLAU.'"

"I suppose Sir Michael regards this note with suspicion?"

"When I told him that Klau had a theory about the Cycle of Crime, and his letter probably meant that, according to that theory, on Wednesday the thirteenth the Blue Rajah was due to be lifted, so to speak, he laughed. Finally, he suggested that I should find out what the warning meant exactly. But I couldn't get to see Klau; his daughter said he was out."

"I suppose every precaution will be taken. You seem to be watching the stone pretty closely?"

"Like a cat watches a mouse!" he rapped. "If any one steals the Blue Rajah tomorrow, he'll be a clever fellow."

Basinghall House, Moorgate street, is built around a courtyard. As a matter of fact, Basinghall House was signed for a hotel, but subsequently was rented in suites of chambers.

The offices of Anderson & Bros. are on the left as you enter, and from the window of the chief's sanctum you may look down into the courtyard. The room chosen for the meeting on Wednesday morning, however, was one opening off this. In common with the adjoining office—as I have said, that of the chief—it had a second door, opening on a corridor.

This latter door, however, was never used and was always kept double locked. Thus, the doorway from the other office was really its only means of entrance or egress. A large window offered a prospect of the courtyard.

At a quarter to eleven on Wednesday morning Mr. Anderson (one of the city aldermen) entered his own private office from the corridor. He was accompanied by Sir John Carron, Mr. Gautami Chinje and Inspector Grimsby. These three had come with him from the safe-deposit vaults. Mr. Anderson had possession of the case containing the diamond.

In the office, already awaiting the party, were Sir Michael Cayley (the Lord Mayor), Mr. Morrison Dell, of the Goldsmiths and Silversmiths Company, Sir Vernon Rankin (ex-Lord Mayor), Mr. Werner of the Gravel Engineering firm, and Mr. Anderson, Jr. "We are all present, gentlemen," said Mr. Anderson. "But before we proceed to the business which brings us here, we shall be quite private."

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Accordingly the party of eight passed through the doorway and Mr. Anderson, Mr. Cayley, Mr. Dell, Mr. Rankin, Mr. Werner, Mr. Anderson, Jr. and Inspector Grimsby remained alone in the private office.

The company being seated, Mr. Anderson, by the table, rose and said: "Gentlemen, this morning, at the meeting, can be briefly dealt with. I have here," he produced a leather case, opened it, and placed it on the table before him—"the diamond known as the Blue Rajah."

He passed, raising the diamond from its receptacle, and holding it in his hand. The sunlight, pouring in through the window, struck the flame-splashed from the wonderful thing.

"In fact, gentlemen," he concluded, "the Blue Rajah is a fitting offering for the city of London to make to the Crown."

"Hear, hear!" chorused the others, and the diamond was passed from hand to hand.

The formal business of making over the stone to the committee was then transacted. A huge check was placed in the pocket case of Mr. Gautami Chinje, and the diamond was passed to the committee.

"You see," said Sir John Carron, holding the stone mainly between his thumb and forefinger and pointing, lecturer fashion, "the diamond is a perfectly proportioned, being a full three-fifths of an inch broad and one-fifth of an inch deep."

Sir John turned and tenderly laid the diamond in its case. At that moment exactly arose a blood-curdling scream in the courtyard, below. "Good Lord!" cried Mr. Werner. "What is that?"

There was a crowded rush to the window—those in the second rank peering over the heads and shoulders of those in the first. The horrid cries continued in a choking yet shrill crescendo.

"Ah! God in heaven! You are killing me! No! No! Mercy—mercy—mercy!"

"It is some one in the archway!" said Sir Vernon Rankin, excitedly. "Can any of you see him?"

No one could, though all craned necks vigorously.

"Unfortunately the window cannot be opened," cried Mr. Anderson. "The catch has jammed in some way, and I am having it removed immediately."

The cries ceased. People were running about below, and the blue uniform of a city constable showed among the group in the archway.

"I'll run down and see what has happened," said Mr. Chinje, stepping to the door which opened on the corridor. "Hello! It is locked!"

Young Mr. Anderson turned to him with a smile. "Both doors are locked, Mr. Chinje," he said. "For the time being we are virtually prisoners."

"Give me the case," said his father, selecting the key of the door communicating with his private office. "There is no occasion for further delay."

The Lord Mayor turned from the window, through which he yet was vainly peering, and stepped to the table.

"Mr. Anderson?"

"Yes," said the latter, glancing back, keys in hand.

"Have you the diamond?"

"Certainly not!"

"Then who has it?"

"No one had it. But the case was empty."

Mr. Anderson replaced the keys in his pocket. His ruddy face suddenly had grown pale. Sir Michael Cayley, the empty case in his hand, stood staring across the room like a man dazed.

Then he forced speech to his lips. "Gentlemen," he said, "since it is physically impossible for the diamond to have left this room, in this room must be concealed for—and found. First, it is by any chance upon the floor?"

A brief examination showed that it was not.

"Then," continued Sir Michael, "the painful conclusion is unavoidable that it is upon some one's person!"

An angry murmur arose. Mr. Anderson raised his hand.

"Gentlemen," he said, "Sir Michael states no more than the fact."

And, his face remaining very pale, he removed his coat and waistcoat and threw them upon the table, emptied his trousers pockets and turned out the linings.

The good enough to examine them, gentlemen," he said.

There was a momentary hesitation; but the Lord Mayor stepped forward and in a businesslike way examined the contents of the several pockets. He turned to Mr. Anderson.

"Thank you," he said. "If the others are satisfied, I am."

There was a murmur of assent, and as the owner of the office picked up his property, Sir Michael, in turn, submitted himself to examination.

All the others followed suit, without further hesitation. And the result of the inquiry was nil.

Eight anxious faces surrounded the little table.

"I suggest," said Mr. Anderson, "that we admit the detective. His experience may enable him to succeed where we have failed."

All agreeing, the communicating door was opened. Mr. Anderson, without quitting the room, called to Inspector Grimsby. The Inspector entered. The door was relocked.

"Inspector," said Mr. Anderson, "the diamond is missing!"

"Whereupon Grimsby's eyes opened widely in amazement."

"Are you sure, sir?"

"Unfortunately, I cannot doubt it. 'When did you last see it?'"

"At the moment when that uproar broke out, below," said Mr. Dell.

"Ah," murmured Grimsby, thoughtfully. "You all rushed to the window, I expect?"

"Exactly."

"Leaving the diamond on the table?"

"Yes."

"That's when it was stolen!"

"Very possibly, Inspector," said the Lord Mayor, a stoutly built man with an imperious manner. "But who took it and where did he conceal it?"

"You must all submit to be searched, gentlemen!"

"We have already done so."

"I am more used to that sort of thing. Do you all agree to being searched by me?"

All did. The previous performance of the party was so good, that only searched the garments, but passed his hands all over the persons of the eight, even making them open their mouths and tapping at their teeth with a lead pencil!

But no diamond was found! Having convinced himself that the diamond was not upon the person of any one present, Inspector Grimsby took but two or three minutes to satisfy himself that it was not concealed elsewhere.

"Good," said Mr. Anderson. "The Blue Rajah is not in this room!"

The Lord Mayor glared. He was a director of the company with which the diamond was insured.

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opened the door of the other cab. He offered his hand to the beautiful girl who was within, according her all the nervous deference due to a queen.

And indeed no queen of ancient times could have looked more queenly than this girl—no Hathor could have carried herself more regally.

She wore a dark, close-fitting costume and an ermine fur. In contrast to the snowy pelts, her large, black eyes and perfect red lips rendered her a study for the brush of a painter, but, like her Oriental grace, defied the pen of the scribe.

Moris Klau's daughter—her dazzling beauty enhanced by all the art of the Rue de la Paix—was a rare exotic one would not have sought in the neighborhood of Wapping Old Stairs.

But her father afforded a contrast at least as singular as her residence. Behind this seductive vision he appeared, enveloped in his cane, wearing his yellow-bearded face crowned by the brown derby of early Victorian pattern—indeed, apparently of early Victorian manufacture.

We passed on—and many a clerical figure followed the furry figure of Moris Klau, who would not hesitate to send me an account of your feet and expensiveness."

"I shall not so hesitate," replied Moris Klau.

We entered the small room from which the Blue Rajah had been spirited away.

Grimsby, who was badly puzzled, was evidently glad of Klau's cooperation. He would lose no credit that he might accrue if the gem were recovered, and in short was congratulating himself upon a diplomatic move.

"It's beyond me," he said, "how the stone was got out of the room. With this door shut, the window fastened, and the other door double locked, as it always is, practically the place is a box."

Moris Klau, from his hiding place in the lining of his hat, took out the scent spray and squirted verberna upon his forehead.

"No," he said, "I don't think it is a ruse—though what anybody profited by it isn't clear."

"It is not clear, you say?" rumbled Moris Klau. "Ah, you have a fog of the mentality, my friend!"

Grimsby flushed.

Moris Klau pulled reflectively at his scanty beard.

"We shall see," he rumbled. "Let us ascend."

We entered the lift and went up to the office of Anderson & Bros. The representation committee was awaiting the mysterious Moris Klau, but had not anticipated a visit from a pretty woman.

They were prepared to adopt toward the man who would seem to have had some foreknowledge of the robbery a certain attitude of suspicion. It was amusing to note the change in their manner.

Moris Klau singled out the Lord Mayor and the owner of the office with unerring instinct. He removed his hat.

"Good morning, Mr. Anderson," he said. "Good morning, Sir Michael. Good morning, gentlemen!"

"This is Mr. Moris Klau," explained Grimsby, "and Miss Klau—Mr. Searles."

Mr. Anderson hastened to place chairs. We became seated. Following a short interval, Sir Michael Cayley bowed his throat.

"We are—er—indebted to you, Mr. Klau," he began, "for taking this trouble. But in view of your note to me—"

Moris Klau raised his hand. "So simple," he said, while the committee watched him, puzzled and surprised—that is, those who were not watching him. "I have a library, you understand, of records dealing with such historic gems. To show you that I have made some study of these matters, I will tell you that the diamond called the Blue Rajah was discovered on the morning of April 13, 1860, in the Kollur Mine, and stolen the same evening. The diamond is the birthstone of the month of April, and this diamond was itself born on the thirteenth of that month. What day is today?"

"Why, it's the 13th of April!" said Sir Michael Cayley with a start.

"The 13th of April," rumbled Moris Klau. "For many years the diamond has been too closely guarded for any

new incident to occur, but when I learn how today it is to be brought here, how many hands will touch it, how many eyes will look upon it, I know that there is danger! It's history repeated."

"These incidents—" again he waved his hands—"proceed in cycles. I warned you. But it was perhaps inevitable. The cycle of crime is as inevitable and immutable as the cycle of the ages. Man's will has no power to check it."

Every one in the room was deeply impressed. Indeed, no one could have failed to recognize in the speaker a

man of powerful mind, one of penetrating intellect.

"I will ask you," replied Moris Klau, "to have sent in to me the black coffee. Myself, my daughter, Mr. Searles, and Mr. Grimsby will view the room from which the robbery took place."

"You would wish us to remain here?" asked Mr. Anderson, glancing at the others.

"I hope, Mr. Klau," said Sir Michael Cayley, "that you will not hesitate to send me an account of your feet and expensiveness."

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For some moments no one seemed to grasp exactly what he had said, simple though his words had been. Then it was borne home to us—that grotesque declaration; and I think I have never seen men more amazed.

Could he be jesting?

"Mr. Klau!" began Sir John Carron.

But: "One moment, Sir John," interrupted Klau. "Let all remain here for one moment. I shall return."

While we stared like so many fools he shuffled from the office with his awkward gait.

During his brief absence no one spoke. We were restrained, undoubtedly, by the presence of Miss Klau, who, one hand upon her hip and with the other swinging her big ermine

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